The Axis of Insanity, by Simon Furman

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[Part One]

(Radio crackles.)
OLD MAN : Must seek help. Someone, anyone, please, if you receive this message (coughs) come quickly. Everything has fallen apart. All our sins come home to roost. Must stop.
(Footsteps.)
OLD MAN : You!
(Crash, maniacal laughter rather like that of Krusty the Clown from the Simpsons.)
JESTER: Well, well. Still some puff in lungs, eh? Some meat on the bone?
OLD MAN: No, no.
JESTER: Back in your chair, old man. You need to take it easy. Relax, kick back. I'll see no one disturbs you. For the rest of your life! (laughs.)

ERIMEM: (learning to read) Either the well was very deep or she fell very er, oh.
PERI: Slowly.
ERIMEM: Oh, this is stupid!
(Slams book shut.)
ERIMEM: What kind of language relies solely on scratches and squiggles? Where are the pictograms and hieroglyphs? The marks of a civilised society.
PERI: Look, Erimem, you wanted to learn English. I know it's a million miles away from Ancient Egyptian, but, well, a child of five could do better.
ERIMEM: Ha!
PERI: Shall we try again?
ERIMEM: Huh. If we must.
PERI: Either the well was very deep or she fell very slowly.
ERIMEM: Why?
PERI: Why what?
ERIMEM: Why did Alice follow the White Rabbit with the strange obsession about time down the hole in the first place? It seems a rash and foolhardy action for so young a child. She ought to have had better sense.
PERI: Hmm. I feel a bit like Alice myself some days.
ERIMEM: And for that matter, what was a rabbit doing with a (turns page) pocket watch?
PERI: I. It doesn't matter. Before you start to analyse the text, you have to be able to read it. Look around you. The Tardis library has books spanning the length and breadth of human civilisation, from ancient to modern to, well, post-modern, I guess. The answer to all your pretty unending questions can be found here.
ERIMEM: (turning pages) I know, Peri. I know. I'm just impatient to begin. And conclude. Surely the Doctor has some kind of learning aid. Oh, what was that expression of yours?
PERI: A quick fix? Hmm. In my experience, the quicker the fix, the faster it breaks. Anyway, look how quickly you picked up the spoken word. I'm sure in no time you'll be reading all the greats. Dickens, Tolstoy, Cartland.
(Distant Tardis engines get louder.)
PERI: Ooo, sounds like we're
ERIMEM: What's happening?
PERI: I think we're materialising, and the Tardis isn't one bit happy about it. Hang on!
(Rumble then silence.)
ERIMEM: Is it over?
PERI: I don't know. Come on, let's go find the Doctor, see where we are. Now
(Door opens.)
PERI: Oh, if I can just remember the way to the control room from here.
ERIMEM: It's this way. Honestly, Peri, a child of five could do better.
(Door closes.)

DOCTOR: Well, old girl, that was certainly a performance. Was that an emergency stop, by any chance? We're a ways past our time and dimension space test, aren't we? Let's try again.
(Tardis engines start, and complain.)
DOCTOR: Oh dear. This is no time to be temperamental. I was rather hoping to catch the meta-spawning off Blucher Major. That old expression, once in a million years. Oh well.
(Footsteps.)
PERI: Doctor, is everything all right? The Tardis
DOCTOR: Is being rather a spoil-sport, Peri. For some reason she won't budge. We're stuck fast here.
ERIMEM: And, er, where is here?
DOCTOR: Well, somewhere in interdimensional space. Not really a here at all, more a nowhere. Now then, move out of the way, will you, Erimem? Let's see now. Ah, hmm, ah! Perfect. The Molinski Univarius.
PERI: The what what?
DOCTOR: It's like a Swiss Army Knife for Time Lords.
ERIMEM: Can it fix the Tardis?
DOCTOR: (under the console) Magnetic pulse emitter, laser drill, sonic agitator. It can fix pretty much anything.
PERI: Anything? How about the Chameleon Circuit?
DOCTOR: Well, not everything. Anyhow, to work. Probably just a kink in the dematerialisation protocol. Soon be on our way.
ERIMEM: Chameleon Circuit? I'm struggling to read one language, and you seem to be speaking in another altogether.
PERI: Right. It helps the Tardis blend in with its surroundings. Other Tardises, anyway.
ERIMEM: Other Tardises?
PERI: Doctor?
DOCTOR: Hmm?
PERI: How can we be nowhere? That's ridiculous. What's outside?
DOCTOR: Probably nothing. Look, we'll be on our way in no time. Just don't touch anything up there. This is very delicate work and and requires a fine ow!
PERI: Fine. Stick your head in the console. I want to see what's out there.
DOCTOR: Peri, don't.
(Scanner turned on.)
PERI: There. Certainly looks like a place to me. If you ignore the strange soft-focus walls and the decidedly odd perspectives. The screen contrast looks wonky.
ERIMEM: What is that glow? It hurts my eyes.
(Out from under the console.)
DOCTOR: Ah. It's rather as I feared. We're in the Axis.
PERI: The Axis?
DOCTOR: Yes. It's, er, a complex. Look, are you sure you want to hear this? We'll be on our way before
PERI: Doctor!
DOCTOR: Right, well, er, imagine the spokes of a bicycle wheel. Each spoke is a damaged or truncated reality, a sort of dead-end in Time. They're formed by changes in established history, some big, some relatively small, which cause the flow of subsequent events to spiral out of control. Often catastrophically.
PERI: And the Axis is the spindle, right?
DOCTOR: Exactly. The hub that maintains and regulates the truncated realities, and ensures that the contamination doesn't spread to the primary timeline.
ERIMEM: What?
DOCTOR: Oh. Well, it (sighs) It's like cauterising a wound to make sure the infection doesn't spread.
ERIMEM: Yes, I see.
DOCTOR: Now, if you'll excuse me (under the console) let's see about getting us out of here. Really don't want to hang around if we can help it. I'm sure if I just
PERI: Doctor.
DOCTOR: (out again) Yes, Peri?
PERI: How exactly do these timelines get er, damaged?
DOCTOR: Ah. Excellent question. And, well, though I'm ashamed to admit it, the answer can often be summed up in two simple words. Time Lords, who are, well-intentioned or otherwise,

prone to dabble and not really tidy up after themselves.
PERI: So. This is all your mistakes tucked away in one big cupboard.
DOCTOR: Well, I probably wouldn't have put it quite like that, but yes, there's an element of accuracy in that description.
ERIMEM: Aren't you the least bit curious about why the Tardis stopped here, now, so dramatically?
DOCTOR: (sigh) I suppose I am. It's just, well, he who presides over the Axis, a chap called the Overseer, isn't exactly on the best of terms with us Time Lords. Very cranky. Probably something to do with having consciousness that exists simultaneously in multiple realities. And given my track record, there's a better than good chance he might be not at all happy to see me.
PERI: Or, he might need your help.
DOCTOR: Yes, he might, mightn't he. Oh well, suppose I'd better grab the bull by the horns. I'll set a localised default just in case. It has it's own logic loop and should work even if the Tardis isn't responding normally. To be used only in dire emergencies. You press here and here, understood?
PERI: Yes, but if
DOCTOR: You and Erimem stay put. I'll find the Overseer, see if he can shed some light on our current status. Whatever happens, do not leave the Tardis, and admit no one but me. Is that understood?
PERI: Sure, but
DOCTOR: No one! If there's a problem, if somehow the Axis has been damaged, there's no telling what might have been unleashed.
(Tardis door opens.)
DOCTOR: I'll be back as soon as I can. I have the Tardis key here somewhere. Ah! So lock up after me. Look, I know Time's even more relative than usual around these parts, but I really shouldn't be long.
(Tardis door closes.)
PERI: Doctor? Good luck! Don't forget to wish us good luck.
ERIMEM: The Tardis has a key?
PERI: They all do.
ERIMEM: All? Earlier, when I asked you about the Chameleon Circuit, you mentioned Tardises. What, how, who?
PERI: Erimem, the sooner we get you reading, the better.

(Walking.)
DOCTOR: Yes, well, this is every bit as welcoming as I remember it. No sense of style, these omniscient types, which is ironic, when you think about it.
(Hysterical laughter.)
DOCTOR: Admittedly, I don't remember that. Is anyone down there? Hello?
JESTER: Hello?
(Faint jingling of bells.)
DOCTOR: You startled me. Where are my manners. I'm the Doctor. And you are?
JESTER: Why, the Prince of Fools, the Joker in the pack, the ha! in ha, ha, ha! I'm here to welcome you to the Fun house. Come with me, Doctor, join my merry dance. The Overseer awaits us in the Oracle room.
DOCTOR: Does he now. Very well then, lead on.

ERIMEM: He's been gone a long time.
PERI: Actually, he hasn't. It just seems that way. Only five minutes by my watch, if you can trust Swiss engineering in these parts.
ERIMEM: Oh, it feels like
PERI: Hours. I know. It's almost hypnotic, the way everything seems to sway and pulse out there. Half the time I'm not even sure exactly what I'm looking at. It just seems, I don't know, wrong somehow.
ERIMEM: I feel it too. We should go out, see for ourselves. Who knows, the screen could be lying?
PERI: Lying? Hmm. Hadn't thought of that. Or maybe just malfunctioning. But the Doctor told us to stay put.
ERIMEM: Oh, what harm could it do just to take a look? We needn't go far.

PERI: I (pause) suppose so. Okay. Just a quick once round the Tardis, get the lay of the land.
(Tardis door opens.)
PERI: But stay close, okay? No wandering off.
ERIMEM: I promise.

PERI: No, just as weird out here. In fact, more so.
(Tardis door closes.)
PERI: I think we've seen enough.
ERIMEM: Wait. Look! That whole passageway, it moved. It was here, and now it is there, I am sure of it.
PERI: The Tardis! We've only taken two steps and yet it's all the way over there. Back inside, now.
ERIMEM: But what about the Doctor? If this Axis place is constantly moving, changing, how will he find his way back?
PERI: I don't know. The Doctor's different. Maybe he can
(Noise.)
ERIMEM: What was that?
PERI: I don't know. I don't want want to know. Come on!
ERIMEM: Peri!
(Vague voice sounds.)
PERI: I see him. Just keep going.
ERIMEM: But Peri, he's hurt. He's on fire! We have to do something. Peri, help me get him inside.
PERI: No! The Doctor said to let no one in. We can't.
ERIMEM: Peri!
PERI: We just can't.

(Sort of fairground music, feet stepping in time.)
JESTER: Doctor, is there a problem?
DOCTOR: Well, yes. Everything appears to be upside down. Including us.
JESTER: Up, down, everything's relative. I like it. Reality can be so humdrum. Altered perspectives, different strokes, that's what punches my ticket. Shall we dance?
DOCTOR: I think I'll sit this one out, if it's all the same to you. Tell me, where are the dancers? I can hear them, but there's no one about.
JESTER: Out of step, out of time. You of all people should know how that it.
DOCTOR: Yes. Tell me, Jester, do you work for the Overseer? All this is new. Certainly since I was last here. Is it *your* handiwork?
JESTER: You could say I'm the new broom around here. The clean sweep. Now come along, Doctor. We have places to go, people to see. ♫ We're off to see the
(Thunderstorm.)
JESTER: Well, isn't that always the way. You forget your umbrella, the heavens open. Ah, well, the tears of a clown and all that. The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain. Come on, Doctor, join in. (receding) Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain.
DOCTOR: Not good. Not good at all.

ERIMEM: Look at him. He is hurt. He can't run.
PERI: What's he running from, that's what I'd like to know. It's coming closer. What is that?
ERIMEM: Peri, we have to do something.
PERI: We don't know who he is or what he's doing here. He could be anyone. We could be putting ourselves at risk. The Tardis. The Doctor would
ERIMEM: What would he suggest, we just stand inside the Tardis safe and sound and watch him die?
PERI: No, no, of course not. But (footsteps) Erimem, wait! Where are you going?
ERIMEM: (distant) I'm going to help him before
(Squelchy growling sound.)
ERIMEM: (distant) Peri!
PERI: I see it. I just don't believe it.
ERIMEM: (distant) Help me! He's too heavy.
TOG: What, what, who?

PERI: No time for introductions. Move, before we're all deep-fried!
ERIMEM: Can you stand up?
PERI: Here, hang on to me.
(Tardis door opens.)
PERI: Erimem, get in. The Minotaur's behind.
ERIMEM: Shut the doors behind us.
PERI: And lock them!
ERIMEM: How?
PERI: Here, like this. Oh, thank goodness we're
(Rumble!)
ERIMEM: The dragon!
TOG: They will never give up, not until I am dead and burned. I thank you, strangers, for this precious lifeline, but by coming to my aid you have surely doomed yourselves.

JESTER: Shh. Mustn't disturb the children. They're studying.
DOCTOR: Studying what? Their books are closed. I'd have thought it a bit difficult to study with their eyes shut.
JESTER: Of course! Enlightenment comes out of the dark. We see our reflection in a stagnant pond, and all is revealed in murky perfection. These are the children of emptiness. This way.
(Door opens, footsteps, door closes.)
JESTER: Tell me what you see.
DOCTOR: A young girl, making amazingly complex shapes out of building blocks.
JESTER: The building blocks of life, Doctor! Here we get to play God, literally. Here we can do anything, *be* anything. Now look again. Tell me what you see.
DOCTOR: I see madness.
JESTER: No! Not madness! Creation. Unchecked, unrestrained, unlimited. Here's a universal truth for you, Doctor. To fully experience life (bells ring) you must first know death! (laughs)

(Occasional roars outside.)
TOG: My given name is Tog. The creature without is a Firebreed. A myth, a bedtime story for wide-eyed whelps.
PERI: These burns certainly look real enough. How's that?
TOG: Oh, better. Thank you.
PERI: Ah, thank Erimem. It's one of her concoctions. The root of this, the sap of that. Seems to have one for every occasion.
TOG: Thank you both. You risked much for a stranger. Many more would have left me to burn.
PERI: Well, you're welcome. And should you feel inclined to repay any debt, real or perceived, you can do so by telling us exactly what's going on. It's like we've stepped into a particularly nasty fairy story.
TOG: Ah, where to begin? And more vexing still, what to tell you without you thinking that I am plainly mad.
ERIMEM: Oh, we have seen many strange and wonderful things.
PERI: Yeah, we're pretty much weirded out, so feel free to give us your chapter and verse.
TOG: So be it. Know then that I am a fugitive from a world gone mad. First came monsters, dark beasts plucked from the mists of time and legend. Those who believe such things say they were wrought from bad science, gathered on forbidden forays on other realms. However they came, their presence was the spark to the flames of chaos that reigned down on Pangorum.
ERIMEM: Pangorum. That is your home?
TOG: Aye, a place of bountiful beauty and stillness made twisted, its very nature turned, spitting, against us. Many souls perished. At first each was keenly felt, each passing tragic and bleakly unique. And then, unbidden, they became faceless, nameless, lost in the mass tally of corpses.
PERI: I'm sorry I asked. But what has all that got to do with this place?
TOG: Armed with what science we had, we tracked the madness to a research facility amid the Northern Wastes. Within we found machinery we could barely comprehend, let alone operate. It was abandoned, but on the topmost level we discovered a patch of empty space. I cannot describe it any better. It led us here, to this place. The enemy was waiting.
ERIMEM: The enemy?
TOG: A creature of many faces, with the power to twist reality at whim. We fought. We died.

Those that remained were hunted down by the Firebreed.
PERI: And does this enemy have a name?
TOG: It does. It calls itself the Overseer.

(Lots of voices.)
JESTER: In here, how they gamble on the fate of empires and planets. The minimum bet on the far tables is one galaxy.
DOCTOR: Really. I'm not one for games of chance myself. You know what they say. The house always wins.
JESTER: Come, come, Doctor. You routinely roll the dice of Time and hope you don't crap out. Your very existence is a random variable.
DOCTOR: You seem to know a lot about me. Have we met before, perhaps?
JESTER: (hysterical laugh) I'll tell you what, Doctor. Let's spin the wheel. Red you win, I tell you about everything. Black, you forfeit.
DOCTOR: Forfeit what, exactly?
JESTER: Ah, let's see. What collateral do you have? No fixed abode, no intergalactic stash of currency to speak of. I know. Your Tardis!
DOCTOR: My Tardis? You seemed quite confident of your godhood earlier. Why not simply create one?
JESTER: Ah, no, no, no, no. No questions now. Not even veiled ones. Come.
(A ball runs round the roulette wheel.)
JESTER: The wheel turns. Are you ready to play?
DOCTOR: Do I have a choice?
JESTER: No.
(The ball falls into a pocket.)
JESTER: Red! You win, Doctor! Congratulations.
DOCTOR: Why am I not reassured?
JESTER: Come, come. Let's go collect your winnings.
DOCTOR: Winnings meaning answers, right?
JESTER: (laughing) Right. I'm sure your little tête-à-tête with the Overseer will prove quite illuminating.

ERIMEM: Overseer? But is that not who the Doctor went to find?
PERI: Yes.
TOG: The Doctor? He is captain of this amazing vessel, yes?
PERI: Er, yes, no. Not, not exactly. It's difficult to explain. The Tardis kind of has a will of its own. It's really what brought us here in the first place.
TOG: Then, by thunder, it could also take us *from* here. Perhaps back to Pangorum. Peri, I must get back, gather others, all willing to fight and if necessary, die. It is too late for our world, but maybe, maybe we can stop the madness from spreading.
PERI: I er, even if I could pilot the Tardis, there's no question of leaving without the Doctor. I have to find him, warn him.
ERIMEM: How? With that thing still out there?
PERI: Make that things plural. There's two, three of them now.
(Peri and Erimem cry out.)
TOG: We must leave. I have seen such things rend solid rock, melt even the toughest blades. Peri, if you have the means to get us from this place, do so now!

(Lots of voices.)
DOCTOR: What is that? What's behind these doors?
JESTER: Lost souls, Doctor. Shadows of once and future people, trapped in a prison not of their making.
DOCTOR: This one's open.
JESTER: Ah, that's our Pandora's Box, our can of worms. And you know what they say about cans and worms. Once you open on, it takes a much bigger can to fit them all back in.
DOCTOR: Hmm. The Overseer?
JESTER: Straight on, Doctor. The Oracle room is just up ahead. He's waiting for you.
DOCTOR: All right. Aren't you coming?
JESTER: No. I'm sure you two have a lot to talk about. This old timeline, that old reality, and

hey, do you remember that little snafu on Delta Five? I'd just be in the way. Really, you go on.
DOCTOR: Most kind. I won't be long.
JESTER: Take as much time as you like, Doctor. (sinister) As much time as you like.

(Roar! Erimem and Peri squeal.)
ERIMEM: I do not know how much more of this the Tardis can take. I am not sure how much more I can take.
TOG: In truth, I told you they will not give up. The Firebreed are relentless.
PERI: I can't abandon the Doctor. I won't!
TOG: If we die, is that your will? Is that what your Doctor would want?
PERI: No.
TOG: Then let us go from here now!
ERIMEM: It is getting hot in here. The Tardis must have been damaged.
PERI: Only in dire emergencies, eh, Doctor? I guess this counts. Press here and here.
(Tardis engines.)
PERI: Doctor, I'm so sorry!

(Knock on door.)
DOCTOR [OC]: Hello? I er thought I'd better look in, see how things were. But then, being omniscient, you probably already know that, so. Hello?
(Door opens.)
DOCTOR: Ah. There you are, old chap. No, no, no, don't get up. I'll
OVERSEER: (groaning) Doctor, is that you? I didn't know who would come. I just (coughs)
DOCTOR: Good lord. What happened to you? You've aged. But you never age.
OVERSEER: I, I'm sorry. I thought I could summon help, thought I could still stop this before it was too late. But it's already too late.
DOCTOR: Don't try to move. Just tell me what happened here. Who did this to you?
OVERSEER: The Axis is tainted. I didn't react in time. It was so fast. I can't fight it any more.
DOCTOR: Fight what?
OVERSEER: It toyed with me. It knew, it knew I would call for help. It knew *who* I would call.
DOCTOR: Tell me what it is.
OVERSEER: The sum of all our fears. It (gurgles, exhales)
DOCTOR: No.
(Jester's bells ring and he laughs as he enters.)
JESTER: Oh dear, I think I broke him.
DOCTOR: Damn you, what have you done!
JESTER: Don't you get it, Doctor? Don't you see? The lunatics have taken over the asylum!

[Part Two]

JESTER: Ding dong, the King is dead. Boo hoo. Long live the King! The puppet master is no more. All the strings are cut. Rejoice! Rejoice!
DOCTOR: You got out.
JESTER: Doctor?
DOCTOR: You got out from whatever stunted, festering timeline you call home. You found a way out, a way here, to the Axis.
JESTER: Well, give the man a Kewpie doll. The Doctor is in. It's taken a while, but we have his diagnosis at long last. Yes, I got out! I found the rabbit hole, I pulled the hanging thread, I saw the man in the moon, and now I am master of all! Ruler of nothing. And you, old man.
(Body pushed to the floor.)
JESTER: Are in my seat. Ah, there. That's more like it. Mmm, the big chair, the responsibility seat. How do I look?
DOCTOR: Was that really necessary?
JESTER: Probably not. But it felt good. The old git served his purpose, but he was starting to royally tick me off, you know?
DOCTOR: No. No, I'm afraid I don't.
JESTER: Come on, Doctor. You're a Time Lord. Don't tell me you've any tears to shed over the Overseer? Over the Overseer. (laughs) Oh, I like that. I'm over the Overseer. I'm
DOCTOR: There may not have been much love lost between us, but that doesn't change the

fact you cold-bloodedly murdered him.
JESTER: Get over it, Doctor. I have. And anyway, I never touched him. Well, not much. I just borrowed a bit of his mind. How was I to know it was the bit that kept him young and beautiful?
DOCTOR: Who are you?
JESTER: Me? I'm the spanner in the works, the ghost in the machine, the
DOCTOR: Enough! You've had your fun, but I'm afraid it's time to lower the curtain on this twisted little pantomime of yours. I'm leaving. If, that is, I can find the door.
JESTER: Misplaced it, Doctor? Happens a lot around here. Doors, walls. These things are unreliable commodities. Take my situation. The walls are all gone, but the door? The door is still locked. Unless, Doctor, you happen to have a key on you.
DOCTOR: A key? The Tardis. That's what you wanted all along. Not me. Any Time Lord would have done. You want a Tardis!
JESTER: And that, my dear Doctor, is the big fat bottom line. That is all she wrote.

(The Tardis materialises.)
ERIMEM: Where are we?
PERI: I don't know. Hang on. (beep) By the look of things out there, still in the Axis. Maybe that's what the Doctor meant. The Tardis won't leave the Axis, but it can move around inside it.
ERIMEM: But are we far enough from them?
TOG: I hear nothing to indicate the presence of Firebreed close by. If we have indeed moved a significant distance, although I am at a loss to know exactly how, we have at least some time to muster our defences.
PERI: Are you sure, Tog? They might be, I don't know, hiding, waiting to pounce.
TOG: Unlikely, Peri. Firebreed are not renowned for their stealth. As I'm sure you now appreciate, they have little need of it.
PERI: Yeah, I get that. What with the teeth and the scales, and the whole spitting fire thing.
ERIMEM: What do we do now? Tog claims that the one the Doctor seeks is the same being that unleashed the Firebreed.
PERI: You're sure, Tog? You're sure this enemy called itself the Overseer?
TOG: It had many faces, spoke in many voices, but yes, it called itself the Overseer. Often, in fact. It seemed pleased with itself. Most oft it took the appearance of a gaily clad, dancing, laughing, fool. A
PERI: Jester?
TOG: The word is unfamiliar to me, but yes, I see its meaning, yes.
ERIMEM: Why do you keep calling it an it? Is it not a he or a she?
TOG: In truth I do not know. As I say, it wore many faces, male, female, neither applied for long. The only constant was its eyes. Unblinking, set, utterly insane.
PERI: Whatever. Look, we have to warn the Doctor. On the one hand, the Overseer's not what the Doctor thinks he is. On the other, it's not the Overseer at all. Either way, he and we, are in deep trouble.
TOG: This Doctor, he can pilot this vessel, yes? Take us hence from this infernal place?
PERI: Sure. I guess. If anyone can.
TOG: Then we shall go forth together, find the Doctor. My only hope, the only hope of my world, and for others like it, lies in returning to Pangorum. If I help you, you must in turn help me get back there. Agreed?
PERI: Agreed.
ERIMEM: I'm coming with you. My reading may not be up to much, but my sword arm is perfectly good.
PERI: No. Someone has to stay with the Tardis, in case the Doctor comes back. In case we need to get in or out in a hurry.
ERIMEM: Oh. And if the Firebreed come back, what then?
PERI: Look, this is what the Doctor showed me earlier. If you have to move the Tardis, press here and here. And hope that it wasn't a one time only deal. This locks, this unlocks. Okay?
TOG: We must go now.
PERI: Coming.
(Tardis door opens.)
PERI: Erimem, hang on as long as you can.
ERIMEM: Good luck.

JESTER: He called this the Oracle room, did you know that?
DOCTOR: Yes.
JESTER: From here he could gaze at all his little kingdoms. All your little mistakes. Imagine. He must have stood here, watching our dead end lives grind on. Watching us loop through the same tired bit of damaged history like a broken record, our needles skipping endlessly back and forth, back and forth. I wonder, was he ever tempted to stir these waters? Try and inject some semblance of pulse into into our furred arterial flow? It can be done, you know. I've dabbled, since I've been the boss around here. It's quite addictive. Almost like being God. The power to create.
(Big splash!)
JESTER: And destroy. But after a while even that gets rather stale. What passes for reality reasserts itself and everything falls back into its neat little loop. It's a bit like watching endless repeats on TV. You start to yearn for something new, something you don't know the ending to. Come closer, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Well, as I'm something of a captive audience hereabouts, why not.
JESTER: Recognise this scene? Or at least that young lady?
DOCTOR: Peri. But who?
JESTER: Don't mind him. He's just a fly in the ointment, an itch in need of scratching. He'll soon be all the proof you ever need that smoking is bad for your health. But dear Peri. Well, it's dangerous out there. Anything could happen.
DOCTOR: Where is she? What's going to happen?
JESTER: Doctor, I honestly don't know. And I can't tell you how genuinely pleased I am to say that. I really don't. In one scenario she could be ash. In another, you could maybe save her. Who knows? It's up to you, Doctor. Try and stop me, or go to her aid. Two doors this time, Doctor. The one on the left leads to your Tardis, the one on the right to Peri and her soon to be cindered companion. No pressure.
DOCTOR: This isn't over.
JESTER: Oh?
DOCTOR: Finding the Tardis is one thing, operating it is quite another.
JESTER: Well, let's just say I've a trick or two up my sleeve. Hurry up, Doctor. The Firebreed have got the buzz, picked up the vibe. Won't be long now.
(Wibbly sound. The Jester's voice morphs into a woman's.)
JARRA TO: That's it. Good boy. Off you go. It's been nice knowing you.

PERI: Tog, are you sure we're going the right way? Looks like we took a wrong turn somewhere east of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.
TOG: I know it, Peri. This place confounds the senses, masks its dark intent with gaudy colours and bright light. The plague that turned my world on its head is here, corrupting everything. I know this madness.
PERI: Okay. And do you know which way to go?
TOG: Perhaps. Before, when the er Jester confronted us, it was close to here, but this market place itself was somewhere else, over in that direction. But nothing here it seems remains where it should be for long.
PERI: Well, that's reassuring.
TOG: Stay close. The Jester could be anywhere, anyone.
PERI: And it just gets better and better.
(Scream. Peri jumps.)
BIRD TRADER: Pretty bird for a pretty lady. Give you a good price.
(Scream.)
PERI: Pretty in the same way that vultures are pretty? Yeah. Ahem, it smells. Boy, you sure know how to charm a lady
BIRD TRADER: Ah, but the bird carries the noble aspirations of all living beings. It soars on the currents of dreams, dives to snatch hope from the jaws of despair.
(Wings flap.)
PERI: Great.
BIRD TRADER: This one here, on the other hand, carries the woes of the world, its carrion eyes blind to love and longing. It scavenges in the gutter for misery scraps.
PERI: I er, kind of like the first one better, but no thanks. We're just looking.
TOG: Come away, Peri. The enemy seeks to delay us with nonsense. The only thing on offer here is

(Roar!)
TOG: Is death!
PERI: Firebreed! I can't see him. Where?
TOG: That way, and closing. Come on!
(Roar!)
PERI: That came from over there.
TOG: They are pack hunters. They are attempting to surround us then close in. This way.
PERI: Tog, hold up. There's too many people. I can't keep up with you. Oh, get out of my way. Don't push. Oh, over here! Tog!
TOG: Peri, are you all right?
PERI: Oh yeah, peachy.
(Roaring and stomping.)
PERI: This way. And keep up.

(Strong wind blowing.)
DOCTOR: The look-out platform. Just the ticket.
(Creaks.)
DOCTOR: Now where? Ah. Peri! (echoes) Peri! (echoes) Hmm. Not exactly the most stable of perches. These timbers look really quite rotten. Peri, up here! (echoes)
JESTER [OC]: She can't hear you, Doctor. You'll have to go down. All the way down. The stairs are just to your left.
DOCTOR: Where are you?
JESTER [OC]: All around you, Doctor. Everywhere and nowhere. On the wind itself, or perhaps just in your mind.
DOCTOR: I think I know my own mind, thank you, and you're not in it.
JESTER [OC]: Watch that first step, Doctor. It's a killer!
(Wood splinters and gives way. The Doctor cries out, the Jester laughs.)
DOCTOR: Yes, well. Fell for that one. I can see I'm going to have to take this one step at a time.

PERI: What now?
TOG: The same. Innocent trappings for the same vile contamination.
PERI: Strange looking carnival, all the same. I don't recognise those for a start.
TOG: The chatterers, a child's plaything. Once upon a time
PERI: From your world, right? Pangorum? I'm sorry.
TOG: Do not be. I have no pity left in me, no tears to shed. My only concern now is to ensure that it never happens again. Whatever was let loose on my world must not be allowed to spread. This way.
BARKER: Hey, little lady. No sad faces allowed in this locality. Here, here, you have to play to win. A prize every time.
PERI: But I, I
BARKER: Aw, take the shoot for the loot, aim for the dame. Drop the sphere right down here. (laughs) Come on! Come on! Roll the ball.
PERI: Oh, I guess it can't hurt.
TOG [OC]: Peri.
PERI: Tog?
(Ball rolls.)
TOG: (approaching) Do not touch. Down!
(Explosion. Peri and Tog cough.)
TOG: Do you hurt?
PERI: No. No. Oh, I probably deserve to. You just said. Oh, I went and.
TOG: Deep breath, Peri. Deep breath. We are alive, that is all that matters. There were twelve of us who journeyed from Pangorum. Armed veterans of many bloody campaigns against the Firebreed and worse. But all but me are dead now, lulled and butchered by this place, by the enemy. Look, trust nothing here. Nothing and no one.
PERI: Okay. I'm okay. Thank you.
(Roar!)
TOG: Ah! Firebreed! Peri, run!
PERI: Go, go! I'm right behind you. Ah, they're everywhere! All around us. Tog!
(Opens wooden trap door.)

TOG: Down here.
PERI: Down there? I can't see anything. It's pitch black. We can't go.
TOG: Get in! Get in now!

(Fairground.)
DOCTOR: Peri? Peri!
(Distant roar.)
DOCTOR: What is that?
AUTOMATON: Mystic the Mighty has spoken. Your question has been answered.
DOCTOR: Oh. Hmm. Well, Mystic, old boy, while you're in the giving mood, care to tell me where Peri is?
AUTOMATON: (clunk) Mystic the Mighty has spoken. Your question has been answered.
DOCTOR: Let's see now. (opens paper) Lost in the Fun house. Hmm. The House of Fun certainly sounds a good bet. Hang on, Peri, I'm coming. Strange. I could have sworn. Oh dear. Good horsey, nice horsey, with your lovely sharp horn.
(Horse whinnies.)
DOCTOR: You really are determined to give me my money's worth, aren't you. Aren't you? An all-singing all-dancing Grimm's Fairy Tale complete with scary monsters. Why? Why all this? What, suddenly you've nothing to say for yourself? Isn't this where you strut and swagger and show me how very clever you are? Well? Or have you turned your attention elsewhere, left the fable to run its course, all the way to the bitter end.
(Horse gallops away.)

PERI: Did you hear that?
TOG: I heard.
PERI: Any idea where we are?
TOG: No. A tunnel of some kind. Metal. I can't see more than a few inches ahead of me, but I'm sure it is getting lighter. Let's keep moving.
PERI: At least they couldn't follow us down here. How's your back?
TOG: Sore. Another second and the Firebreed would have stripped the flesh from my bones. Al things considered, we got off lightly.
PERI: We have an expression on Earth. (splash) Out of the frying pan. Uh oh.
TOG: Water. That sound.
PERI: Oh, I hate my life!
TOG: Run!
(A torrent rages through. Running.)
TOG: Look above us. If I can just

(Fairground and the horse.)
DOCTOR: This is no time to be laying down on the job. Almost there. One entry, please, and don't spare the horses.
(Door opens and closes.)
DOCTOR: That's much too close for comfort. Now then, Peri? Peri!

(Water splashing, coughing.)
PERI: Oh, will someone please show me the exit? I've had enough fun for one day.
DOCTOR: Need a hand?
PERI: Doctor. Oh, Doctor, is it really you?
DOCTOR: It's really me, Peri.
PERI: Oh.
DOCTOR: I thought I told you to stay in the Tardis.
PERI: Oh yeah, well, that never works. And anyway, you were in trouble.
DOCTOR: What about Erimem?
PERI: We left her in the Tardis. She's safe.
DOCTOR: Hmm. I wish I shared your confidence. The entity pulling the strings hereabouts seems to know a lot about me, and Time Lords in general.
PERI: The Overseer?
DOCTOR: Is dead. Whoever or whatever's been toying with us, this place, it isn't him. The aspect it presents is that of a Court Jester, though I have the feeling it's only letting us see

what it wants us to see.
PERI: Oh, well, so much for my big moment.
TOG: Then who is this er, Jester, Doctor?
PERI: Doctor, this is Tog. He's from (sotto) you know, one of your little mistakes.
DOCTOR: Someone's mistake, Peri. Someone's. There are other Time Lords, you know, and even then it isn't always down to us.
TOG: Time Lords?
DOCTOR: It's a long story, old chap. Tell me, how did you get here?
TOG: Through a hole in the very air. One moment we were in Pangorum, and the next here. It was not a pleasant experience, I can tell you. We all lost the contents of our stomachs.
DOCTOR: Hmm. A tear in the fabric of Space and Time, most likely. It certainly tallies with what I already know. We must go there, to Pangorum. The answer to your question, Tog, lies there.
TOG: But the research facility was deserted. By the looks of it, it had been for some time.
DOCTOR: The research facility? Tell me more.
TOG: I do not have the science to fully explain, but it started there, the chaos that was visited on our world. We heard stories later, of forbidden experiments, warnings ignored, a name.
DOCTOR: I want to hear everything, you know, Tog, but let's hear it on the run. I've a nasty feeling I know exactly where our mysterious host is headed. And why.

(Tardis door opens.)
ERIMEM: Doctor! You're safe! I was so worried.
DOCTOR: Yes. Yes, of course you were. But I'm back now.
ERIMEM: What happened? Did you find the Overseer?
DOCTOR: I did, and everything's fine. A little misunderstanding, that's all. We can be on our way now.
ERIMEM: But Doctor, what about Peri and Tog? We can't go without them.
DOCTOR: Ah, yes. They went on ahead of us. I'll explain when we get there. It's not far.
ERIMEM: I, I don't understand.
DOCTOR: You will.
(Tardis door closes.)
DOCTOR: You will.

(Running.)
DOCTOR: Which way?
PERI: This place goes on for ever. Are you sure?
DOCTOR: Reasonably.
TOG: Our reflections, did you see? We are turned and stretched every which way. Made short, tall, fat, thin. What manner of place is this?
PERI: It's a Hall of Mirrors, Tog. That's the idea, you know, to laugh at how weird you look?
TOG: Oh. Ah.
PERI: Mind you, the state of me, any plain old mirror will do.
(Breaking glass.)
TOG: What now?
DOCTOR: Ow!
TOG: Doctor?
DOCTOR: It's nothing, it's just a flesh wound.
(More breaking glass.)
TOG: More trials. It seems the games are not yet over.
DOCTOR: No, this is something else. Something much worse. Quickly, through here!
PERI: The wall, I can reach right through it, like it's not there at all.
DOCTOR: It's not. Now come on!
(Running.)
TOG: We're back where we left the Tardis.
DOCTOR: Yes. Distance, like so much else in the Axis, is illusory. Hurry before
(The Tardis dematerialises.)
PERI: The Tardis! It's, it's
DOCTOR: Gone.

[Part Three]

ERIMEM: Ahem. Doctor?
DOCTOR: Mmm?
ERIMEM: Is anything the matter? You seem very quiet.
DOCTOR: Do I? What am I normally like?
ERIMEM: Well, quiet, I suppose, but not like this. Aren't you going to tell me what happened in the Axis, or where we're going, or where Peri is?
DOCTOR: All in good time. That's a strange turn of phrase, don't you think? Good time. That implies there's a bad time. Oh well, I suppose there is. And let me tell you, bad time's no fun at all. It has a smell, a stale reek of lost opportunities and zero prospects, and a way of getting into your clothes and brain, stamping despair on your collars and cuffs. A slough. And the name of the slough was Despond. Bunyan. Do you know his work?
ERIMEM: Er, no. I can't say I do. Doctor?
DOCTOR: Hmm?
ERIMEM: Quiet is fine.

PERI: Doctor, isn't this where you say something reassuring? Something light and upbeat with just a hint of a back-up plan? Doctor?
TOG: What is happening to this place, the Axis? Doctor?
DOCTOR: Can I get back to you both later?
PERI: Doctor?
DOCTOR: Okay, okay. Tog, the Axis, I believe, is folding in on itself. With the Overseer dead and no other controlling mind in residence, the reality hub is being crushed by the truncated timelines it supports. Nature abhors a vacuum and all that. And right now the Axis is one very big bit of nothing.
TOG: I am indeed sorry I asked.
DOCTOR: And Peri, I'm fresh out of back-up plans, but I'm sure I'll think of something.
PERI: Perhaps Erimem just triggered that emergency fail-safe what's-it, and the Tardis is still somewhere in the Axis?
DOCTOR: No, I'd know if the Tardis was still here. And besides, it wasn't Erimem who initiated the dematerialisation.
TOG: (gasps) The Jester?
DOCTOR: Yes. I rather fear so. He or she or it expressed a great deal of interest in the Tardis, but I never thought for a moment he she or it possessed the knowledge necessary to pilot her. With very few exceptions, only other Time Lords do.
TOG: Then the Jester is a Time Lord?
DOCTOR: That's what's really thrown me, because he she it isn't a Time Lord. We have an aura that's almost impossible to disguise. No, the Jester has somehow mastered Time and dimensional disciplines known only to a very select few, and I don't know how or why.
(Rumble.)
PERI: How long do we have?
DOCTOR: Well
PERI: And if you say Time is relative, I will have to kill you.
DOCTOR: No, well, an hour. Maybe two, unless
PERI: Unless?
DOCTOR: Unless we can somehow send an SOS to Guardus.
PERI: Guardus?
DOCTOR: The Overseer's home dimension. He's not a one-off. There are others like him, beings with this type of multi-faceted consciousness.
PERI: Well, can we send this SOS?
DOCTOR: Doubtful. Otherwise the Overseer would have contacted Guardus when he had the chance. I can only assume the Jester cut off all lines of communication bar one. He wanted a Time Lord, period, and a Tardis. The Jester may quite well be mad, but he's very cunning with it.
PERI: I'm still waiting for reassuring and upbeat.
DOCTOR: So am I, Peri. So am I.

(The Tardis materialises. Tardis door opens.)
ERIMEM: Oh, it's freezing, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Yes, it is rather. Someone probably forgot to pay the heating bill.
ERIMEM: What?
DOCTOR: Nothing. You can run along and get into something warm. I'll see what I can do to make it a little cosier around here. Few pictures, throw or two. Be like home in no time.
ERIMEM: Doctor, I don't like this. What is this place? Where have you brought me?
DOCTOR: This, my dear, is where it all began. Through this, we can see everything. But it's far more breathtaking if it's open, so
(Opens French windows. Howling icy wind.)
DOCTOR: Pangorum.
(Closes French windows.)
DOCTOR: Now then, my dear. What shall we do first?

(Walking quickly.)
DOCTOR: Tell me more about Pangorum, Tog. You mentioned a research facility of some sort.
TOG: Yes. When the beasts rose to claim our world we who remained searched for a root cause, a rhyme or a reason. Having exhausted any likely or logical scenario, we looked for the impossible. Emptied caches of rumour or hearsay, trawling the underground journals for dark science and urban myth.
DOCTOR: And you found?
TOG: An unhinged mind, and a quest to reconcile science and fantasy. According to this particular journal, our lurid childhood fables of brave knights and monstrous beasts were not fiction at all, but time lost fact. The author claimed to be able to reach back to Pangorum's distant past and bring the beasts to our present.
(Myriad voices in the distance.)
PERI: Doctor, what is that?
DOCTOR: The walls between the Axis and the dimensions around it are collapsing. The painful truth is rapidly dawning on the poor souls trapped within each dead end timeline. Their existence is a sham, and now they know it.
PERI: That's terrible. They sound so lost.
DOCTOR: The closer we get to the Oracle room, the more pronounced the effect becomes. Try, try and blot it out. We can't afford to be distracted, not with so much at stake.
TOG: But Doctor, Pangorum, my poor home, it is too a sham? Please, I must know.
DOCTOR: Hmm. No point in trying to sugar coat the pill, is there. Not with all you've seen and heard. Yes, I'm afraid the Pangorum you hail from is a sham. A duplicate piece of the jigsaw that is its past, present and future. Do you see?
TOG: I, I think so, yes. And this piece of Pangorum is infected, dying, right?
DOCTOR: Yes.
TOG: Then help me, Doctor. Help me to put it out of its misery.
DOCTOR: Very well. But I need more to work with. The author of this journal, the one you spoke of, does he she or it have a name?
TOG: Yes. Jarra To.

(Rummaging in tool box sounds.)
ERIMEM: You certainly seem to know what you're doing, Doctor. A few moments ago this place looked like some derelict crypt, and now we have light and heat, and I don't know what else.
DOCTOR: Why so surprised? I always know what I'm doing, don't I?
ERIMEM: It's just you seem to know your way around. Have you been here before?
DOCTOR: Well, all this hardware *seems* very sophisticated, but really when you get right down to it, it's a switch here and a button there. All I did was bring the emergency generators online, cross-connect a few wires around some burned-out circuits. Child's play. The base could really use a dust, though. Look at those cobwebs. Yuk.
ERIMEM: Doctor, I've been thinking.
DOCTOR: Oh yes?
ERIMEM: When we're done here, whatever it is we're doing here, and Peri's back from wherever she's got to, I'd really like to go home.
DOCTOR: Home?

ERIMEM: Mmm. Back to er, Chicago.
DOCTOR: No problem. Chicago, Chicago, a wonderful town. (whirr) Oh bother. Must have blown a tube. Still, should have a spare round here somewhere. Ah, I know where. (beep) Why someone didn't put stairs in this place, I'll never know.
(Lift arrives with a ding.)
DOCTOR: Hold the fort. I'll be back in a jiffy. Don't touch anything, now.
ERIMEM: Oh, I won't. Ha, ha! You know me.
(Lift door closes and lift leaves.)
ERIMEM: Only you don't, do you. You don't know me at all.
(Tries door.)
ERIMEM: Oh, locked. Great. Now where?
(Opens French windows.)
JARRA TO: Even if you survive the drop and the lava fields below us, the Firebreed would hunt you down.
ERIMEM: Who, who are you?
JARRA TO: It was the Chicago thing, wasn't it? Clever girl. Ah well, I was bored with that face anyway. A little too serious for my liking. Now get inside!
ERIMEM: No! Get off me!
JARRA TO: You're letting all the heat out.
(French window closes.)
JARRA TO: That's better. Really now, what was all the fuss about? You're privileged. You got a ringside seat, girl, for the greatest show of all.
ERIMEM: What are you going to do?
JARRA TO: Do? Do? Why, nothing. Just sit back and laugh like fools as nature takes its course and the worlds come tumbling down. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls
JESTER: Roll up, roll up! See the end of the world! (laughs and jingles bells.)

(Running.)
PERI: Doctor, what's behind all these doors?
DOCTOR: You don't want to know, Peri. Keep going. Once we're inside the Oracle room, we'll be safe, for a little while at least.
PERI: Upbeat, Doctor. Remember?
TOG: I know this place.
DOCTOR: In, hurry! I don't think we can count on anyone making it through to be as level-headed and reasonable as our friend Tog here.
(Door closes.)
DOCTOR: Some of those timelines have been festering for aeons.
PERI: (breathless) Isn't there a better way to deal with these mistakes? It seems inhumane.
DOCTOR: It does, I know. But trust me, the alternative is far, far worse. Any one of those infected realities could contaminate the primary Timeline. The structure of Space and Time itself would collapse. The universe would descend into chaos.
TOG: Which will happen anyway if the Jester escapes, right?
DOCTOR: Right. So, let's see if anything here is still in a shape we can use. There, that must be the Overseer's interface.
PERI: Oh dear.
DOCTOR: Oh dear is right. I imagine once the Overseer did as expected and sent out his SOS, the Jester destroyed the interface, and did a pretty good job too.
PERI: What about Erimem? That thing has her. We can't just give up.
DOCTOR: I don't intend doing so, Peri. Good job I brought the er Swiss Army knife.
TOG: Can it be fixed?
DOCTOR: I'll try, but I don't hold out much hope. Sorry, Peri, the uplink orb is smashed and each one of those hair filament wires needs to be reattached. Ah well.
PERI: Molinski Univarius, ahoy.
TOG: Doctor.
DOCTOR: Hmm? What is it, Tog? I really need to concentrate here. It's fiddly work.
TOG: What about the portal?
DOCTOR: Yes. What about the portal? If it's still viable, we could at least cross over into Pangorum. Or rather, the infected portion. I wonder, is that where this Jarra To went, and does she still have business there to conclude?
TOG: What role does your Jester play in all of this?

DOCTOR: Yes, well, I'm beginning to have some thoughts about that, too.
PERI: Look, guys. Anything's got to be better than standing here soldering hair filaments, right?
DOCTOR: Yes. Yes. Er, Tog, can you find the portal again?
TOG: We passed it as we came in. That open door. I thought I recognised that stretch of passageway.
PERI: Doctor?
DOCTOR: If we can find the Tardis, all this could be put straight. Of course
PERI: Stop! I don't need to know. Are we going or not?
DOCTOR: Yes, we're going. Come on.
(Door opens.)
DOCTOR: Get ready.

PERI: Doctor, there are two open doors.
DOCTOR: I see that, and I think
PERI: Doctor!
DOCTOR: We have company!

JESTER: (laughs) It's a lovely day, don't you think? A lovely, lovely day for the end of the world.
ERIMEM: I don't understand. Who *are* you, and what do you want from me?
JESTER: An audience, of course. Don't we all? Not much fun wiping out creation without a few appreciative ooo's and awe-struck aah's.
ERIMEM: You're insane.
JESTER: Define sanity. Dear Erimem, if travelling randomly through time and space, nipping history here, tucking the future there, is your idea of a nine to five, then you got me. I'm m-m-m-mad! Mad as a hatter. Mad as a March hare! And please stop edging towards that tension wrench. Trust me, it'll get ugly.
ERIMEM: The Doctor will stop you.
JESTER: He'll try. Why do you think I left him alive? He'll try and he'll fail. But the trying will afford me some little pleasure.
JARRA TO: It's the unpredictability I crave. The coulds and mights and perhapses. When they slapped a condemned notice on my world and put progress on pause, they consigned me to a living hell of always knowing how the story ends. No surprises, no twists, no turns.
BIRD TRADER: Why haggle when you know the final price?
BARKER: Why spin the wheel when the ball's already in the slot?
JESTER: Why tell the joke when you already know the punch line?
ERIMEM: Peri has an expression she's fond of using. Get over it.
JESTER: What?
ERIMEM: You heard me. You've had a bad time. Well, all right. But something happened here. Something happened to this whole world to make it the way it is. And I think *you* did it. I think you started it here. You!
JESTER: Well, I confess, I didn't see that coming.
(Thump! Erimem cries out. Thud.)
JARRA TO: And neither did you.

DOCTOR: Get him off me!
(Struggles.)
DOCTOR: Don't hurt him, Tog. He's no threat, poor wretch. Who knows what he's been though.
PERI: Are you all right?
DOCTOR: Yes, thank you. Although all things being equal, I'll be very glad to see the back of this place.
PERI: Right. Because now we're off to the land of fire-breathing dragons and mad scientists.
DOCTOR: Thank you, Peri. After you.
PERI: Great. Er, Tog? Which door?
TOG: Oh, the open one. Oh no, I see what you mean. This one. Or is it this one. Yes, this one. I think.
PERI: You think?
TOG: There was much confusion when I first arrived here. Bloodshed, conflict.

DOCTOR: Wait, wait, wait one second. Before, when the Jester showed me to the Oracle room, the open door was this one.
PERI: You're sure?
DOCTOR: Peri.
PERI: Okay, I'm going. I'm going.
TOG: Wait, wait, wait. Let me go first. I know the lay of the land, should we have to move fast on the other side.
PERI: Sure, go ahead. I'm not out to make any great trumpeting gender statements here.
TOG: Ah, yes. I'll see you on the other side.
(Whoosh!)

(Whoosh!)
PERI: Oh! Oh! My. Where?
TOG: The bad fields. We're in the magma fields.
(Whoosh!)
PERI: Doctor!
DOCTOR: She moved it. Jarra To, she moved the portal!
PERI: The heat! Oh, it's too much. I can't breathe.
DOCTOR: Tog, get us out of here.
TOG: It's too late. We're in the magma fields.
(Roar.)
TOG: Nesting ground of the Firebreed.
(Flames.)

JARRA TO: Come on. (slapping face) Wakey, wakey. Trust me, you really have to see this.
(Erimem groans.)
JARRA TO: Step lively, girl, or you'll miss all the fun.
ERIMEM: What, what's happening?
JARRA TO: Your friend, the Doctor, just paid a house call on a newborn Firebreed and its mother. The kid's fine, but mum's pretty ticked off. They get a little (laughs) hormonal.
ERIMEM: What are you talking about?
JARRA TO: Oh, honestly. Come see for yourself. But don't blink. It'll be over in a flash.
(French windows open.)
ERIMEM: What are you
JARRA TO: Look, out there. Just to the right of that magma flow. See? Oh, suit yourself. Stay back there, then. Me, I always loved a nice bonfire, and something to roast on it.
(Walks out onto balcony.)
JARRA TO: Coo-eee! Doctor? Can't hear me. Shame. What?
(French windows closed.)
JARRA TO [OC]: Oh, you really are starting to annoy me.
ERIMEM: Oh, I'm sorry. Can't hear you.
JARRA TO [OC]: You are going to pay for the Doctor's quick death when I get hold of you, girl.
ERIMEM: Come on, come on. Hurry up.
(Lift arrives.)
JARRA TO [OC]: Going somewhere?
ERIMEM: Oh, close, please close.
JARRA TO [OC]: Peel your flesh and spit in the wounds.
(Lift leaves.)

(Lift arrives.)
ERIMEM: Hello? Oh, what am I saying.
(Walking.)
ERIMEM: Well, this is certainly nice. Hmm. Much better.
(Lift leaves.)
ERIMEM: Oh! Oh great. Of all the floors I could have picked, I pick the cellar. The no windows, no doors variety.

DOCTOR: Why hasn't it attacked, or just burned us to a crisp? We're trapped.
PERI: Doctor, it's too much. I can't bear it.

DOCTOR: Hang on, Peri.
TOG: If we stay here further, the heat will boil our very blood.
DOCTOR: Between the devil and the deep blue sea. Or at least an orange magma sea. What's it? Ah. I see. Junior.
TOG: We're to be the infant's first kill. The mother has just been manoeuvring us into position.
DOCTOR: Yes, and here he comes. Tog, look, it's eyes are shut. How?
PERI: He's using sound, Doctor. Look.
DOCTOR: Well done, Peri. Yes. Their ears must be highly sensitive. Be quiet, be still. It's our only chance.
TOG: What?
DOCTOR: Move now, both of you!
(Running.)
PERI: Doctor, what's happening? Why aren't they attacking?
DOCTOR: Molinski Univarius a go-go.
TOG: That tiny thing?
DOCTOR: Size is no substitute for versatility, Tog. The Molinski Univarius has a subsonic setting. I just had to find the right pitch to cause these creatures the maximum discomfort.
TOG: Where now?
DOCTOR: That way. Look, up there.
TOG: That's it. The research facility. We're close.
DOCTOR: She wanted to watch.
TOG: Doctor?
DOCTOR: The Jester, or Jarra To to you. It wasn't enough to send us to our doom, she wanted to see it happen.
TOG: Which means she knows we're here. She'll be ready.
DOCTOR: Yes, I rather fear it does.
PERI: You've caused quite a stir, Doctor. Look at them all.
DOCTOR: Hurry! I can't remember the last time I charged the Molinski. If it runs out of juice now, it's all over.
TOG: Doctor, the ground.
DOCTOR: It's coming apart. It's breaking up. Oh!
PERI: Doctor! Get up. You have to jump. Doctor!

(Lift arrives.)
JARRA TO: Come out, come out, wherever you are.
(Lift door closes and leaves.)
JARRA TO: Oh, fine. If you want to play
JESTER: Let's make the stakes life or death. He seeks her here (crash) he seeks her there. Or he finds her by lighting a flare.
(Flame.)
JESTER: I really wouldn't have chosen to hide way back there, girl.
(Erimem coughs.)
JESTER: That's where I house my last er, guest. (laughs) He's rank, isn't he? Look at the way the flesh has kind of oozed. And oh, is that insect larvae I see there?
ERIMEM: (gagging) Who?
JESTER: Who indeed. Or rather, what? Erimem, meet the last Time Lord to meddle in my affairs.
(Maniacal laughter.)

[Part Four]

JESTER: He wanted to check out, so I obliged. I squeezed his brain so hard, his all-mighty, holier than thou intellect poured right out of his ears.
ERIMEM: A Time Lord?
JESTER: A Time Lord. Oh. Pause for inevitable slow-witted response.
ERIMEM: Like the Doctor?
JESTER: Yes, on two counts. As in a Time Lord, and as in dead.
ERIMEM: I don't understand.
JESTER: Of course you don't. You're just a hitch-hiker riding on the shirt tails of the great and

grandiose. I wonder sometimes why exactly the Doctor saw fit to allow the likes of you and that Peri to tag along at all. I mean, compared to him, or me for that matter, you're plainly a lesser lifeform. Perhaps he thinks of you as pets.
ERIMEM: Pets!
JESTER: Mmm, pets. Something to stroke and make a fuss of now and then. Something to fill the long silences with idle noise. I imagine he thinks it makes him look important, having you two hanging on his every word and deed. Impresses the natives, you know.
ERIMEM: No. He wouldn't. Not the Doctor.
JESTER: Oh? I know quite a bit about your Doctor. Any idea how many girlies came before you? Or how many are still to come? Let's see now. Ah, Susan, Polly, Zoe, Liz, Jo, Sarah Jane, Leela, Romana, Nyssa, and that's just off the top of my head. You see? Pets. Uses 'em and discards 'em. You, and of course Peri, you're fashion accessories for the busy Time Lord about town. Now, come on! Walkies!
ERIMEM: I won't! Ah!
JESTER: Oh!
(Running.)
JESTER: Now that would have hurt
JARRA TO: If I had that kind of equipment, which plainly I don't.
(Erimem screams.)
JARRA TO: I'm stronger than you, and a whole lot smarter.
(Thud. Lift door opens.)
JARRA TO: For instance, given various appealing floor options like ground and foyer, why on Pangorum did you press basement?
ERIMEM: Base ment?
JARRA TO: Unless (laughs) Unless you can't even read! Oh dear, oh dear. You are the runt of the litter, aren't you. I wonder. What's the humane thing to do in this situation?
(Lift goes up.)

TOG: Doctor, turn off your device, The Firebreed stampede is breaking up the top crust of the magma field.
DOCTOR: I can't, Tog. Not with the Firebreed all around us. Get Peri inside. As soon as you're safe, I'll make a dash for it.
PERI: He'll never make it. Soon there won't be any solid ground left. Jump now, while you can.
DOCTOR: Go with her, Tog. Head for the research facility. I'll
TOG: But Doctor
DOCTOR: Oh dear. (beeps) That, I fear, is the end for the Molinski, and quite possibly for me too.
PERI: Doctor! Jump!
DOCTOR: Yes. Yes, I rather think I better had.
TOG: Hurry!
DOCTOR: Here goes!
(Jumps.)
TOG: I have you, I think.
DOCTOR: Thank you.
PERI: Hurry, while they're still confused.
DOCTOR: My feet are burning. It's hard to run, but not impossible with the right motivation. I just hope I don't pass out.
(Thud.)

(Energy building up.)
JARRA TO: Come on out. That's better. Now listen to that, Erimem. Won't be long now. Things are coming nicely to the boil. Soon be time to jump in my lovely new Tardis and get the hell out of well, hell. Oh, come on. That begged an inane bleat of what, Jarra? Why, Jarra? Three bags full, Jarra. Oh, you're no fun. Well, see if I care. Here, let's try this for size.
ERIMEM: (Jarra) Oh Jarra, what do you mean by that, Jarra?
JARRA TO: Well, isn't it obvious? I intend to wipe out this entire stunted timeline, suck it through a big portal and into some big cosmic vacuum bag.
ERIMEM: (Jarra) But Jarra, can you really do that?
JARRA TO: Of course. I punched a hole through to the Axis, didn't I? I'm just making a bigger hole in the old dimensional wall.

ERIMEM: (Jarra) But why, Jarra, why?
JARRA TO: Because I want to cover my tracks, bury the who and what I was, make a bright shiny fresh start in my handy-dandy Tardis. ♫ Pack up my troubles in an old kit bag ♫
ERIMEM: Shut up! Shut up! Just shut up. Please.
JARRA TO: Fine. Then ask me a question. Dazzle me with your piercing insights into this whole big messed up muddled up
ERIMEM: Where's the other Tardis?
JARRA TO: What?
ERIMEM: You said that was a Time Lord down there. Well, where's his Tardis? I mean, why go to all this trouble to steal the Doctor's Tardis if you already had one?
JARRA TO: That is a very good question. Top marks, go to the head of the class, get a gold star.
ERIMEM: Well? No, wait. Let me tell you. You can't find it, can you. The Doctor spoke of a Chameleon Circuit. Yes, that's it. You can't find it. It could be anything. This pillar, that machine. It could be anywhere. Maybe even outside, disguised as a pile of rocks. Whatever you did to him, however much you hurt him, he wouldn't tell you.
JARRA TO: Oh, well, no one's perfect.
ERIMEM: What did you do to him?
JARRA TO: Huh. What did *I* do to *him*? How about what he tried to do to me? Okay, so my Time Scoop experiments had got rather out of control, but there's no call to send someone in to shut me down and wipe my brain, is there? That's what they meant to do, you know. The Time Lords. That pompous ass walked in here without a by your leave and started taking my life's work apart. Said I was dabbling in areas I knew nothing about.
ERIMEM: And?
JARRA TO: And I showed them, didn't I. Even back then I was strong. Stronger and smarter than they realised. I had technology and know-how mined from other dimensions, other eras. I turned their mind tap technology right back at them, sucked the Time Lord's brain dry.
ERIMEM: Only you didn't. Not quite.
JARRA TO: No. He resisted to the bitter end. Wouldn't let me have the one scoop of cerebellum I wanted above all else. I learned so much. Absorbed information on countless worlds including Gallifrey and Earth. Expanded my mind a thousand-fold in a heartbeat. But no, no Tardis.
ERIMEM: So he beat you, just like the Doctor's going to beat you.
JARRA TO: No! No! I have his Tardis here, don't I? And the Doctor is dead. Dead! Dead! Dead! Right now the Firebreed are picking their teeth with his bones. Don't you see? It's just the two of us until the end of the world!

(Slapping face.)
PERI: Doctor? Doctor. Can you hear me? Doc!
DOCTOR: Perfectly, thank you. There's really no cause for concern.
PERI: No cause for? Doctor, I thought you were dead. You dropped like a stone when you barely reached the edge of the magma field. If Tog hadn't come back for you
DOCTOR: Yes. Mental fail-safe. Once the pain got too much my brain went into a protective fugue state. Starts the healing process, locks down a few neural pathways. The Firebreed?
TOG: Have kept their distance, almost as if
DOCTOR: They're being controlled, kept at bay out of this compound. Yes, that seems to fit the pattern. How's it looking, this place?
TOG: Deserted. The lower levels of the research facility are in darkness. No sign of Jarra To.
DOCTOR: Strange. If she saw our escape from the magma fields, I'd have expected her to be here waiting for us. Perhaps she was distracted, missed the final act.
PERI: Maybe she's toying with us, just like she did in the Axis. Perhaps she just wants us to think we're safe?
DOCTOR: Yes, good point. We can take nothing for granted, that's our only certainty. Who knows what
(Thunder.)
TOG: A storm.
DOCTOR: Something far worse. A massive portal is forming, one big enough to swallow this entire world. You're about to get your wish, Tog. Jarra To is going to wipe out this entire timeline.
TOG: But that's good, isn't it?

DOCTOR: No! The way thing stand, this will only hasten the collapse of the Axis support mechanism. When Pangorum goes, so does the entire structure of Time.

(Energy building.)
JARRA TO: Going, going, and time I should be gone. I wonder what this thing is? Police box. Ha! Did the Doctor think of himself as a policeman? Oh, how grand. Have to love and leave you, Erimem. I have worlds to visit, wonders to experience, and, you know, I'll pick up a pet of my own. Something a little less yappy.
ERIMEM: You're leaving me to die?
JARRA TO: Afraid so. But never mind. Perhaps your absence will spawn some other timeline in a bottle. One where you live happily ever after in snivelling ignorance. Or maybe not. But hey, as consolation goes, take it or leave it.
(Tardis door opens.)
JARRA TO: Feel free to run wild, sweet child. There's nowhere to run to, not any more. For the next few minutes, this whole world is your plaything. Enjoy.
(Tardis door closes. Running feet, lift summoned.)
ERIMEM: Come on, come on.
(Lift arrives.)
ERIMEM: Basement. Well, that's one word I've learned. Let's hope it isn't the last.

PERI: Doctor, the elevator.
DOCTOR: I see it. Step back where we can't be seen.
TOG: It's her, isn't it? Jarra To.
DOCTOR: We'll soon see. Tog, I'll need a distraction. There don't seem to be any stairs in this building, so I'll have to take the elevator. Can you try and draw her away? I have to get to her dimensional interface assembly, try and shut it down.
TOG: I will buy you as much time as I can, Doctor, but promise me, if you prevent the cataclysm you speak of, this Pangorum must still be purged.
DOCTOR: I promise. Tog, if we don't meet again, it's been
PERI: Excuse me. Sorry to break up all this male bonding, touching though it is, but it hasn't stopped.
TOG: Hasn't
PERI: The elevator. It's gone straight down to the basement.
DOCTOR: Then this is our chance. Tog, you're sure the machinery you described was on the top floor?
TOG: The observatory, yes. Before, when we searched this building, that seemed to be the focus of everything. It's where we found the portal.
DOCTOR: Right, come on, then. Give it a moment, let whoever it is get out and about down below us.
(Summons lift.)
TOG: Stand back. This iron bar isn't much of a weapon, but it's better than nothing.
PERI: If you've any compunctions about hitting a lady, Tog, hand it over. I'll do it with pleasure.
(Lift arrives.)
DOCTOR: Er, Peri.
(Lift door opens.)
TOG: Clear.
DOCTOR: Good. Everyone in. Let's just hope we're not too late.

ERIMEM: (coughing) Oh, the smell. I can't do this. I. Don't think about the body. Just concentrate on the robes, on the job at hand. Oh, it's here somewhere, it's got to be. Don't. Don't think about the body. Oh, there's a key. That's what the Doctor said. Every Tardis has a key. Oh, it's here somewhere. It must be. But where? And what? Urgh. What is it with these Time Lords? I've never seen so much clutter and chattel, and none of it, none of it looks like a (jingle). An ankh. The symbol of life. Perhaps it's a sign.

(Lift arrives, door opens.)
DOCTOR: Deserted.
PERI: But the Tardis is here. Fantastic!
DOCTOR: Indeed. Now Tog, Peri, look around. See if you can find Erimem. I'm going to get to

work on the dimensional interface assembly, and not a moment too soon by the look of things.
PERI: What if she comes back? Jarra To.
DOCTOR: One problem at a time, Peri. We can't leave without Erimem, and we can't leave this timeline to simply self-destruct.
TOG: Come, Peri. There are further chambers through here. It won't take us long to search.
DOCTOR: If she comes back up in the elevator, I'll hear. Now go!
PERI: Oh, all right. But Doctor?
DOCTOR: Mmm?
PERI: Watch your back.
DOCTOR: Yes, yes. Now, what's she gone and done here?
PERI: Okay, fast sweep. You take left, I'll go right.
TOG: As you wish, but Peri, take this, please.
PERI: Sure. Thanks.
(Leaves.)
DOCTOR: Yes, clever. Some kind of anti-tamper switch, binary coded on the HOMS scale. Almost unbreakable. Unless you're a Time Lord.
(Tardis door opens. Footsteps.)
DOCTOR: Where would she get this kind of know-how? If I didn't know better. Ah, now how
(Thump, thud.)
JESTER: Now, now, Doctor. Don't want to spoil the punch line, do we? Now then,
(Lift descending.)
JARRA TO: Where's that going? Seven four two one. Foyer. Basement. Well, I'm so glad I decided to hang around to the bitter end. I can't wait to see what happens next.

(Footsteps.)
TOG: Peri, don't. It's me.
PERI: Ah, Tog. I almost.
TOG: We seem to have come round in a complete circle. Did you find anything?
PERI: Nothing. Come on, let's get back. I don't like the thought of the Doctor alone in there. Jarra To could be anywhere, anyone.
TOG: Agreed. This way.

ERIMEM: Doctor!
TOG: Erimem?
PERI: No, it's her. Jarra To, or the Jester, or whatever face he's wearing.
ERIMEM: What? Peri.
PERI: Get away from him now.
ERIMEM: No, Peri, it's me. I didn't, I didn't do this. Peri, I found him here like this. I was just
PERI: Back off, or I swear I'll cave your head in, all powerful entity or not.
TOG: Be careful.
ERIMEM: Stay away. Peri, listen to me, please. Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly.
PERI: What?
ERIMEM: Either the well was very deep or
PERI: Erimem. Oh God, I nearly
JARRA TO: Well, it was worth a shot, I suppose. Would have been great watching you split your friend's head open like a ripe melon. But hey, that can still be arranged.
PERI: Get back.
JARRA TO: I don't know how you can hold on to that iron bar, it's red hot.
PERI: Ow!
(Iron bar clatters.)
JARRA TO: There. All done? Good. Now who shall I kill first? Eeny meeny miney mo.
TOG: Argh! No more! I kill you with my bare hands. Peri, Erimem, go.
PERI: Go!
ERIMEM: Go where?
DOCTOR: Peri.
PERI: Doctor.
DOCTOR: Move the Tardis before she recovers.
ERIMEM: Yes, of course. Do it. Use the preset fail-safe.
PERI: But what about

ERIMEM: Go now, Peri. You must!
(Tardis door opens and closes.)
JARRA TO: You're nothing, less than nothing.
(Thud!)
ERIMEM: Tog!
JARRA TO: Oh dear, I think I broke him. (laughs)
ERIMEM: No.
JARRA TO: You next, then
(The Tardis dematerialises.)
JARRA TO: Peri? No! No! No!
(Tardis door opens.)
JARRA TO: What?
ERIMEM: It was here all the time, right under your nose. Disguised as a door and a bit of wall, and you never even noticed.
JARRA TO: Ah, the dead Time Lord's Tardis.
ERIMEM: All it took was the key, and he took that with him to the grave.
JARRA TO: Move away, girl. You can't go anywhere in it. It won't save you.
DOCTOR: No, but it'll put her out of your reach for the time being. Get in, Erimem, and lock the door.
ERIMEM: Doctor, she has the mind and memories of a Time Lord. She
DOCTOR: Not really, otherwise she'd have known how to find his Tardis. She just has a very basic idea of a generic Time Lord's mind. Now Erimem, go!
(Tardis door closes. Jarra To screeches and thumps on the door.)
DOCTOR: Just you and me now.
JARRA TO: You'll achieve nothing. Nothing! This world is still going to end.
DOCTOR: And take you and me with it, I know. But, what have we got now, a minute or two? Time for a chat, anyway.
JARRA TO: Ha! A chat?
DOCTOR: Yes, why not? Some lively discourse before the end of everything. It has a rather Bergman feel to it, don't you think?
JARRA TO: Get the girl to open the Tardis doors now!
DOCTOR: No. Let's talk, Jarra. May I call you Jarra? Let's talk about Time Lords. We're a strange bunch, when you shake it all down. And I can understand how we come across as pompous or arrogant. But you see, we take our responsibilities very seriously. What must have happened is after it became apparent that the former owner of that Tardis there was not coming back, he was, alive or dead, deemed lost. His timeline was shut down immediately, effectively shutting both you and he, or she, in with it.
JARRA TO: So?
DOCTOR: Well, that's just it. We're expendable, and we know it. We may occasionally have the odd delusion of grandeur, but ultimately we serve Time, not the other way round. And if Time is threatened, as it often is by people meddling in its treacherous and muddy waters, then we are expected to put things right. Or die trying. It's what it is to be a Time Lord.
JARRA TO: Doctor?
DOCTOR: So yes, there's a tendency for, shall we say, showmanship or eccentricity, which in turn manifests itself as a form of pomposity or arrogance, but well, that's because we're always just one short step ahead of the Reaper, and we must be willing, should the need arise, to turn and embrace him. We can afford to form no long term relationships, put down no roots, know no security in any shape or form.
JARRA TO: Doctor!
DOCTOR: You really do have bits of, what was his name, by the way?
JARRA TO: Protoksheltaknapretnik.
DOCTOR: Well, possibly. But with even just a nip of Protok in your head, you know all I've said is true, and so you know I'm prepared to die right along with you if it means ending your threat right here.
JARRA TO: Doctor, get out of my way. This is just a stay of execution. Unless your Erimem magically grows a brain of any note and finds a way to pilot that other Tardis, she's going nowhere! And sooner or later, I will get in. As for you, Doctor, I think I shall throw you to the Firebreed.
(French windows opened, wind blowing.)
JARRA TO: We're drawing them into the compound, Doctor. If the fall doesn't do the job, they

certainly will. Goodbye, Doctor!
TOG: Jarra To, for crimes against this world.
DOCTOR: No!
TOG: I sentence you to burn in hell!
(Tog and Jarra To scream as they fall. Splat. Firebreeds roar.)
DOCTOR: Tog.
(French windows shut.)
DOCTOR: Erimem, it's me. Open up. (knocking) Erimem, we first met on horseback near Thebes.
(Tardis door opens.)
ERIMEM: Doctor! Oh, thank goodness.
DOCTOR: Ah, yes, good. Now er, let me go, will you? There's a good girl.
ERIMEM: Doctor, please try not to talk to me like I'm a pet.
DOCTOR: Er, yes. Of course. Run and find Peri for me, will you? The Tardis can't have gone far. I'll be back in a jiffy.
ERIMEM: Where are you going?
DOCTOR: Guardus. It's just a short sideways dimensional step. We really must get the Axis patched up and a new Overseer in residence. Truth be told, Erimem, I'd rather face another six Jarra To's than set foot in the Grand Praesidium on Guardus. Ah well.
(Tardis door closed. Tardis dematerialises.)
ERIMEM: And to think I gave up a dynasty for this.

(Two Tardises materialise and doors opens.)
PERI: Wow. This is incredible.
ERIMEM: What are they all?
DOCTOR: Tardises. Or should that be Tardisi? Tardi? I'm never sure.
ERIMEM: But there are hundreds of them. What are they doing here?
DOCTOR: The relationship between Time Lord and Tardis is intricately woven. Once cannot exist without the other for long. When a Time Lord dies, their Tardis dies with them.
PERI: Then this is like an elephant's graveyard, only for Tardis-seseses.
DOCTOR: Yes. We're out of normal Space and Time, in an impacted pocket dimension. You're very privileged, you know. Only a few have seen it. Fewer still non-Time Lords.
ERIMEM: It's beautiful and sad.
DOCTOR: Yes. We'll leave Protok's Tardis here. Maintain the natural order and all that. And one day it'll be the turn of my Tardis.
PERI: Upbeat, Doctor. Upbeat.
DOCTOR: Yes, thank you, Peri. Doesn't do to get too maudlin. Perhaps that's why I like having you around.
PERI: Why Doctor, is that a comradely sentiment?
DOCTOR: Yes, but don't worry, I'll get over it. Now, come along.
ERIMEM: Where to?
DOCTOR: Pangorum. I made a promise to a very brave man and I intend to honour it. And him.
PERI: So we're going to finish what Jarra To started, destroy the infected Pangorum timeline? Cool.
DOCTOR: Yes.
ERIMEM: Yes, cool.
DOCTOR: Heaven help us.
(Tardis door closes. Tardis dematerialises.)